

# MODERN MUSICAL CELEBRITIES

BY HERMANN KLEIN

## I. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF VERDI, WAGNER, GOUNOD, LISZT, AND TSCHAIKOWSKY

THE present paper is the first of several selected from Mr. Hermann Klein's reminiscences of his thirty years' experiences as a London musical critic, in which position it was his good fortune to meet nearly all the figures prominent in the musical world since 1870. Later papers will treat of other famous singers (among them Mme. Adelina Patti and M. Jean de Reszke), and of the late Sir Augustus Harris and his distinguished services to opera. An interesting feature of the present paper is that it describes a personal meeting with each of the five composers on the occasion of their last visit to London.

EDITOR.

IN May, 1876, I saw Verdi conduct his Manzoni "Requiem" at the Royal Albert Hall. This was generally supposed to be his third visit to London, the previous occasions being when he came over, in 1847, for the production of the opera "I Masnadieri," which he wrote expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre; and again, in 1862 (the Exhibition year), when his "Inno delle Nazioni" was performed at the same theater. But, according to his intimate friend Mr. Randegger, the maestro also ran over from Paris one summer, without letting any one into the secret, for the purpose of hearing for himself what the world-famous Handel Festival was like. Mr. Randegger has told me that his surprise was indescribable when he came across Verdi at the Crystal Palace, with a score of "Israel in Egypt" tucked under his arm. He insisted, however, upon his presence being kept unknown, and seems to have returned to Paris as mysteriously as he came.

At the period of the "Requiem" visit there happened to be residing in London an elderly Italian musician named Deliguoro, upon whom Fortune had not smiled very kindly, and who frequently enjoyed the hospitality of my parents' house. An admirable contrapuntist, stuffed full of musical learning, he had the technic of

composition at his fingers' ends; but of individual or fresh ideas his brain was utterly devoid. Like most disappointed geniuses, he was unable to perceive his own lack of originality. Once he played me a melody in mazurka rhythm,—a commonplace Neapolitan tune enough,—which he fondly regarded as an inspiration; and I shall never forget the old gentleman's horror when, a day or two afterward, he caught me strumming his piece by ear upon the piano. I had to swear by all his own particular saints that I would never even hum his tune again. "Some one would be sure to steal it." He was utterly oblivious to the fact that he had virtually stolen it himself.

The announcement of Verdi's coming was a great event for Deliguoro, inasmuch as the master and he had been fellow-students at Milan, under Lavigna (1831–1833). This was just after the preposterous refusal of the authorities of the Milan Conservatory to admit Verdi as a pupil at that institution because they thought he did not display sufficient promise of talent. Deliguoro's delight at the prospect of meeting his old friend knew no bounds. He had not seen him for quite thirty years. "Giuseppe and I were like brothers. We ate, drank, and worked together the whole of the time. His harmony exercises always



had more mistakes than mine, and he could never master the art of writing a really good fugue. I wonder whether he has dared to put one into his 'Requiem.' We shall see; for I am going to write and ask him for a ticket to hear it."

In due course tickets arrived for the rehearsal and the concert, and Deliguoro showed them to me with the utmost pride. Most of the distinguished musical folk in London were present at the "grand rehearsal"; and yet the vast auditorium, capable of holding ten thousand persons comfortably, looked comparatively deserted. I sat with Deliguoro not far from the orchestra. He was so excited that I had the utmost difficulty in restraining him from climbing over the barrier and taking Verdi in his arms there and then. Nor were my own feelings altogether calm as I gazed for the first time upon the man who had composed the "Traviata," "Rigoletto," and "Aïda." He was then sixty-three years of age, and his closely cut beard was fast turning gray; but he was as active and robust as a youth, his eyes were keen and bright, and his clear, penetrating voice, when he addressed the choir (in French or Italian, I forget which), could be heard all over the hall.

At the end of the fugal chorus "Quam olim Abrahæ" (which my neighbor declared to be more scholarly than anything he had anticipated), Verdi came round to speak to his friends among the select audience, and before long I could see that he was staring in an uncertain way at Deliguoro. Then, all of a sudden, he appeared to make up his mind, and took a bee-line over the stall chairs to the spot where we were standing. "Tu sei Deliguoro, non è ver?" exclaimed the maestro. "Sì, sì, son Deliguoro," replied his old friend, his eyes brimming over with tears. And then followed a long and close embrace that I thought would never end. It would be hard to say which of the two former classmates evinced the fuller measure of joy.

But in the midst of the excitement I was not forgotten. Deliguoro presented me to Verdi as "the son of the best friends he had in London, and a youthful but modest

musical critic." I added that I had been indebted to Signor Deliguoro for much good teaching and advice in the study of the art. "And you could not do better," said Verdi, in French, as he shook me by the hand. "Deliguoro is not only a Colossus of counterpoint, but he has a great heart, and I feel personally grateful to any one who is kind to him."

Nor did the great man, who was the soul of generosity, forget his own duty in the matter; for, prior to leaving London, he sent a substantial money gift to the less fortunate friend of his youth, who was destined to survive only a year or two longer.

Surely none who heard that magnificent performance of the Manzoni "Requiem" can have ever forgotten the combined effect of the beautiful music, the superb singing of the Albert Hall choir (trained by Barnby), the wonderful voices of the soloists, and, pervading all, the subtle magnetic influence induced by the presence and personal guidance of the composer. The solo artists included three members of the original quartet, namely, Mme. Stolz, Mme. Waldmann, and Signor Masini. All possessed noble voices, and the famous tenor, who has never been heard in opera in England, was then quite at his best. But the undoubted gem of the whole performance was the "Agnus Dei," with its octave unison phrases for the two women's voices, sung by Stolz and Waldmann with a delicacy and charm of simply ethereal loveliness. Nor shall I forget the pains that Verdi took at rehearsal to obtain from his chorus and orchestra of eight hundred a pianissimo fitting in proportion to the exquisite tone of these singers.

Just a year later Richard Wagner came to London to take part in the series of Wagner Festival concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, which had been arranged with a view to paying off the debt on the new theater at Bayreuth.<sup>1</sup> The events of this visit are briefly narrated in "Grove" by Mr. Edward Dannreuther, at whose house in Bayswater Wagner stayed from April 30 to June 4. Evidently, however, Mr. Dannreuther

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that there was a deficit of something like 140,000 marks (\$35,000) after the opening season of 1876, when "Der Ring des Nibelungen" was performed for the first time in its entirety. London, however, did little toward liquidating this debt. It was ultimately paid off with the gross receipts of some cycles of "The Ring" at Munich, for which the performers all gave their services gratuitously.



had no desire to dwell in detail upon the incidents of this London episode. He was even a trifle ashamed that his name should have been associated with it in Glaserapp's biography of Wagner "and elsewhere"; and he expressly states that he "had *nothing whatever* to do with the planning of the 'festival,' nor with the business arrangements." All he did was to "attend to the completion of the orchestra with regard to the 'extra' wind-instruments, and at Wagner's request to conduct the preliminary rehearsals."

No doubt such was the case. But thus to disclaim all connection with the enterprise has always sounded to me rather like a slur upon the good intentions of those whose devotion to Wagner's cause had led to the inception and organization of this affair. That Wagner himself was annoyed at certain things which occurred, and that he went away, on the whole, extremely disappointed, may be safely assumed, if only from what was subsequently said by his native champions of the press in Bavaria and elsewhere. A great many of those statements, however, were either untrue or grossly exaggerated. The true facts have never been related, and as I happened to be behind the scenes more or less throughout the Wagner Festival of 1877, it may be interesting to my readers if I now endeavor, as concisely as possible, to tell the story.

To make matters clear, I must premise that the adversaries and supporters of Wagnerian art in London were then ranged in three distinct camps. There were, first, those who refused to accept his music under any conditions; secondly, those who would accept all he had written down to "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin"; and, thirdly, those who worshiped both at the temple and from afar, accepting and rejoicing in everything. The first of these sections was gradually dying out, or being absorbed by the second, as the beauty of Wagner's operas slowly but surely forced its way into the heart and understanding of the people. The prejudice against the later works still prevailed, however, and to such an extent that no London impresario yet

dreamed of mounting "Tristan," or "Die Walküre," or "Die Meistersinger," despite the success those works were then meeting with in many Continental cities. All one could say was that musicians were beginning to display an interest in the preludes and excerpts occasionally performed in the concert-room; while, as a matter of course, the London Wagner Society was constantly growing in numbers and strength, and working a steady propaganda in behalf of the cause.

Among the most popular artists appearing in England at that time was the eminent violinist August Wilhelmj, who was one of Wagner's most ardent disciples and the leader of the first Bayreuth orchestra. He was pretty accurately acquainted with the state of affairs, and he it was who originally conceived the idea of inviting Wagner to conduct a series of concerts upon a festival scale in the British capital. He broached the subject during the autumn of 1876, and at first, I believe, Wagner was utterly disinclined to consider the proposition. Twice already had the master been in England, once in the summer of 1839,<sup>1</sup> and again in 1855, when for a single season he took the baton laid down by Costa as conductor of the Philharmonic Society. His recollections of this second visit cannot have been wholly pleasant; but Wilhelmj showed him how completely the aspect of things had changed, and argued that there was now an immense curiosity to see him, as well as to hear more of his music. Besides, six concerts at the Albert Hall would assuredly result in a net profit of as many thousand pounds. The temptation was too strong to be resisted; Wagner ultimately decided to go.

Wilhelmj, delighted at having secured the master's promise, at once set about finding a responsible manager who would undertake the arrangements and advance the necessary capital for the preliminary outlay. Herein lay the initial mistake. Instead of employing some well-known concert agent, the violinist placed the whole business in the hands of a very respectable but entirely inexperienced firm named Hodge & Essex, London agents for certain

<sup>1</sup> He then stayed only eight days, and lodged, together with his wife, at a boarding-house (since pulled down) in Compton street, Soho. This short visit Wagner made en route for Paris, but he also stopped at Boulogne, where he made the acquaintance of Meyerbeer, and obtained from him the introductions which gave rise to Heine's oft-quoted remark: "Do you know what makes me suspicious of this young man? It is that Meyerbeer recommends him."



American organs, whose place of business was at the Hengler Circus building in Argyll street. I will not deny that Messrs. Hodge & Essex worked hard and did their best; but, unfortunately, both they and Herr Wilhelmj were far too lavish in their expenditure. They engaged Materna and the pick of the Bayreuth artists at big prices. The orchestra, with Wilhelmj as leader, was nearly two hundred strong. The disbursements for advertising, printing, programs, etc., were enormous, and everything was done in the costliest fashion. All this might have been justified had the attendance at the festival reached the expected level; but the prices charged for seats were almost prohibitive, and the public refused to come in anything like the necessary numbers.

On the night after Wagner's arrival in London a dinner was given in his honor by Messrs. Hodge & Essex at their show-rooms in Argyll street. Only recognized friends of the "cause" were invited, and I had the honor of being among the number. Toasts were given and responded to, and Wagner made one of the characteristic little speeches for which he was famous. Late in the evening I was introduced to him. He asked me to sit beside him for a few minutes, and began by asking me in German how old I was.

"Nearly twenty-one," I replied.

"Why, you were not born when I was last here. I suppose you know, though, that your critics did not display any great affection for me then. Do you think they are better inclined toward me now?"

I answered that I fancied he would perceive an improved attitude all round.

"I hope so," said Wagner. "I know that some of my best and truest friends live in London, and sooner or later their influence must begin to tell."

I ventured to remark that I thought his music, in the long run, would suffice to accomplish the desired conversion. He turned his keen glance toward me for a moment, and paused as though wishing to read me through. The inspection appeared to be satisfactory, for a smile suffused his features as he replied:

"Yes; but here they still call it 'music of the future,' and in this land of oratorio, who knows how long they will take to get rid of their prejudices, unless the agitators keep stirring them up? Well, we shall see what happens next week."

Then he turned to speak to Wilhelmj, and the brief chat was at an end. I sat still, however, a minute or two longer, and watched with intense interest the play of facial expression, the eloquent curves of the mouth, the humorous light in the eyes, the quiet, subtle laugh, while he addressed in turn the various friends gathered about him. That evening Wagner was thoroughly happy. He felt himself in a congenial atmosphere, content with the present, and hopeful, nay, sanguine, of the morrow. I was glad to have seen him in that beatific mood, and not a little proud to have spoken with him. What a pity that he was not to bid his final farewell to England in an equally satisfied frame of mind!

The final rehearsal for the opening concert of the festival took place at the Albert Hall on May 5. Wagner had himself chosen the programs. He was to conduct each first part, consisting of selections out of all his operas, from "Rienzi" to "Tristan," while Hans Richter, who now made his first appearance in England, was to direct the excerpts from "Der Ring des Nibelungen," which formed each second part. Most of the preliminary work had been done under Mr. Dannreuther, in whom Wagner reposed great confidence. All that remained was to put on the finishing touches and for the composer-conductor to accustom himself to the vast auditorium and the huge crescent-shaped phalanx of orchestral players spread before him.

From the outset, as it seemed to me, he failed to place himself *en rapport* with either. The abnormal conditions appeared completely to upset him. In a word, he succumbed there and then to a severe attack of Albert Hall stage-fright, an illness familiar to nearly every artist on stepping for the first time upon the platform of that gigantic amphitheater.<sup>1</sup> However, after a glance of astonishment round the empty

<sup>1</sup> Another bad sufferer that day was Frau Materna. I was speaking to her in the artists' room just before she went on to rehearse, and she was positively trembling with excitement and fear "lest she should be unable to make herself heard in such a huge place." I begged her to sing quite in her usual manner and, above all things, not to force her voice. She afterward thanked me, and said she had been simply amazed to find the hall so easy to sing in.



hall, and a few whispered words to Wilhelmj and a few more to Hans Richter (who was posted beside the conductor's desk), the great man raised his baton and gave the signal for a start. The inaugural piece was the "Kaisermarsch," and it was well chosen for the purpose. Its pompous and sonorous strains, proceeding with stately, rhythmical movement throughout, were perfectly calculated to show off the imposing volume of the big orchestra in such a building as this. It gave no trouble, and the effect was superb; but unluckily, instead of imbuing Wagner with a little confidence, this preludial essay left him more palpably nervous than before.

The second piece on the list was the overture to "Der Fliegende Holländer." Here, I confess, I looked for something exceptional. I had always understood that Wagner was a fine conductor (at least of works with which he was in true sympathy), and I expected his reading of the "Dutchman" overture to be in the nature of a revelation. Imagine, then, my disappointment and sorrow when it resulted in a complete breakdown! Twice, nay, thrice, did Wagner make a fresh start, while Mr. Dannreuther and Mr. Deichmann, the faithful leader of the second violins, took in turn the task of translating his complaints and instructions to the orchestra. But it was of no avail. He utterly failed either to indicate or obtain what he wanted, and at last, in sheer despair, he threw down his stick and requested Richter to do the work for him. Well do I remember the sharp round of applause with which the band greeted the Viennese conductor as he mounted the rostrum. It was thoughtless, unkind if you will, for it must have smitten with unpleasant sound upon the ears of the sensitive composer; but the overture went without a hitch. It was played as I had never heard it played before.

After this Wagner decided that he would conduct only one or two pieces at each concert, leaving all the rest to Richter. But would the public be satisfied? They were paying to see Wagner as well as to hear his music. The matter was discussed, and it was suggested, as a compromise, that when he was not conducting he should sit upon the platform in an arm-chair facing the audience. This course was actually adopted. At each of the six concerts comprising the festival scheme, after he had

conducted the opening piece and acknowledged a magnificent reception, he sat down in his arm-chair and gazed at the assemblage before him with a Sphinx-like expression of countenance that I shall never forget. He must have felt as though he were being exhibited, like some strange, interesting animal, for all the world to stare at; and his sensations were doubtless in an equivalent degree unenviable.

Obviously it would have been unfair to estimate Wagner's ability as a conductor by what he did at these concerts. Yet I fear some of his critics were not wholly considerate in that respect, for the comments uttered in several quarters showed plainly that no allowances had been made. I quite agree with Mr. Dannreuther, therefore, when he says that "at the Albert Hall Wagner did not do himself justice. His strength was already on the wane. The rehearsals fatigued him, and he was frequently faint in the evening. His memory played him tricks, and his beat was nervous."

To make matters worse, it was quickly perceived that the festival was going to prove a financial failure. Nothing could have been more discouraging than the sight of numerous unoccupied boxes and stalls, and in the cheaper parts "a beggarly array of empty benches." It was determined, just in time, that a couple of extra concerts should be given at reduced prices, the artists and executants accepting half-salary, while all the "plums" of the festival were crowded into the two programs. This move retrieved the fortunes of the venture. A heavy loss was converted into a profit of seven hundred pounds, which sum was duly handed over to Wagner for his Bayreuth fund. But it was a miserable result in comparison with the expected thousands, and, notwithstanding the polite letters of thanks which he afterward wrote to his English friends, I have more than a lingering suspicion that he always looked back upon this eventful visit with mingled feelings of anger and regret.

IN the autumn of 1882 Gounod came to England to conduct the first performance of his fine sacred work "The Redemption." He was no stranger to London. One of the refugees of 1870, he had made a stay there of considerable duration, and among other pieces brought out his cantata



"Gallia," which he conducted at the opening of the Royal Albert Hall in 1871. Even previously to this, however, had he sketched his design for the work which he labeled "Opus vitæ meæ," and there is ample evidence that he spent from first to last upward of a dozen years upon the score of "The Redemption." Having arranged with Messrs. Novello & Co. for its publication (at the highest price ever paid at that time for an oratorio), Gounod arrived late in September to superintend the final rehearsals for its production at the Birmingham Festival. This was the last of the Midland gatherings over which Sir Michael Costa presided, and I owed to him the honor of a personal introduction to the composer of "Faust," who was then sixty-four years of age.

Gounod was one of the most fascinating men I have ever met. His manner had a charm that was irresistible, and his kindly eyes, as soft and melting as a woman's, would light up with a smile now tender, now humorous, that fixed itself ineffaceably upon the memory. He could speak English fairly well, but preferred his own language, in which he was a brilliant conversationalist; and he could use to advantage a fund of keen, ready wit. He was at this time influenced by a recrudescence of that religious mysticism which had strongly characterized his youthful career; but his tone, though earnest and thoughtful when he was dwelling upon his art, could brighten up with the lightness and gaiety of a true Parisian. He was rather upset, on the morning of the London band rehearsal at St. George's Hall, by the numerous mistakes in the parts, which led to frequent stoppages. The trouble reached a climax in the "March to Calvary," where, after about the ninth or tenth stop, Gounod turned to Costa and remarked:

"Seulement ici puis-je pardonner tous ces arrêts, quoiqu'ils gâtent ma musique."

"Pourquoi cela?" inquired Sir Michael.

"Parce que," replied Gounod, "à ce point il y a douze 'stations,' et à chaque station il faut naturellement un arrêt."

After all the typographical and other errors had been rectified, the march was tried through again, and went so magnificently as to arouse the master's undisguised admiration, which deepened with astonish-

ment when Costa informed him that the instrumentalists had never seen a note of the music until that morning. He said to me later on: "They are wonderful readers, these English players. There is scarcely a mistake that is due to inaccurate deciphering of the notes. And what makes it even more remarkable is that my work is so full of awkward chromatic progressions."

I ventured to observe that since he was last in London our orchestras had been turning their attention somewhat extensively to Wagner.

Gounod retorted quickly: "Yes, I know that. But you will not tell me that Wagner's four semitones in 'Tristan,' or his slurred runs [*notes coulées*] in 'Tannhäuser,' require more delicate care than my 'framework of the augmented fifth.'"<sup>1</sup> I thought I detected a slight touch of scorn in his voice, and made no attempt to argue the point.

At that same rehearsal Gounod did an unusual amount of singing. The solo vocalists comprised what the new critic of the "Times," Dr. Francis Hueffer, was then fond of describing as the "representative English quartet"—Albani, Patey, Edward Lloyd, and Santley; nor have I forgotten how exquisitely William H. Cummings (now principal of the Guildhall School of Music, London) delivered the touching phrase allotted to the Penitent Thief. But, as a matter of fact, Gounod, with his sympathetic *voix de compositeur*, was singing more or less all through the rehearsal, wisely exercising his rare faculty for impressing his exact ideas upon the interpreters of his music. And what beautiful music it was! What a tremendous effect it created at Birmingham! So deeply was Gounod impressed by his triumph there that, long before "The Redemption" had been produced in Paris, he set about writing his second great sacred work, "Mors et Vita," for the Birmingham Festival of 1885. He was paid an even larger price for this than for its predecessor (I believe the exact sum was twenty thousand dollars), and he fully intended to come over to conduct it. In the meanwhile, however, an action had been brought against him in the English courts by Mrs. Weldon, and, inasmuch as he was mulcted in heavy damages, the composer deemed discretion to be "the

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the peculiar harmonic structure which the composer had avowedly employed as the predominant feature of the accompanying chords in "The Redemption."



better part of valor," and stayed at home in Paris. He never ventured across the Channel again.

THERE was, for musical dwellers in London, something almost providential about the visit paid by Franz Liszt during the spring of 1886. He had not stood upon British soil for forty-five years. There seemed to be but the remotest likelihood that, at the age of seventy-five, he would ever trouble himself again to travel over land and sea to a country whose attitude toward him and his works had invariably been chilly and unsympathetic. But the persuasions of his pupil and protagonist Walter Bache, who worked so long and lovingly to obtain recognition and appreciation for his master's works, at last proved effectual. On the evening of April 3 he arrived. On the morning of the 20th he departed. Three months later, on the night of July 31, he died at Bayreuth of pneumonia, resulting from a bronchial cold, which he aggravated by attending one of the first performances of "Tristan und Isolde" given at his old friend's Bühnenfestspielhaus.

I was one of a party of guests invited to meet the Abbé Liszt on the night of Saturday, April 3, at Westwood House, Sydenham, where he was to be the guest of Mr. Henry Littleton (then head of the firm of Novello & Co.) during his stay in England. I went early, and was just in time to see him welcomed by his host after a fatiguing journey from Paris. He had been met at Dover by Mr. Alfred Littleton, the eldest son and present head of the house, who gave me an interesting account of the trip. There could be no doubt that Liszt was extremely dubious about our real feelings toward him. In fact, the position was very much akin to that in which Wagner had stood nine years before, only with the important difference that Wagner came "professionally," for the purpose of extracting British gold from British pockets, whereas Liszt came purely in a private capacity, to attend some performances of his works. He was simply nervous, therefore, lest, being no longer a public artist, he should be shining in the reflected light of his past glories as a virtuoso, amid an atmosphere that was uncongenial to him as a creative musician.

An hour after his arrival he entered the

vast oak-paneled apartment which had just been added as a music-room to Westwood House. It was crowded with all the musical notabilities then in London, every one of them anxious to gaze upon the visage of the man who was then perhaps the most interesting musical figure in the world. Dressed in his semi-priestly garb, the venerable abbé walked slowly down the steps leading to the floor of the room, and smiled graciously upon the groups that saluted him as he passed. He looked somewhat tired, and it was remarked by those who knew him that he had aged considerably during the last few years. Still, his yet bright eye, his yet brilliant powers of conversation, his yet industrious habits, precluded the smallest suspicion that the end was so near. His attention that evening was largely monopolized by old friends; but many new ones were brought to his notice, and I had the pleasure of being introduced with a kind word or two by the loyal and indefatigable Walter Bache, who, with others, took part in a program of his compositions.

Liszt himself did not then play, though, when spending other evenings quietly at home in the Littleton family circle, he almost always went to the piano of his own accord and enchanted them with some piece or improvisation of his own. Once he surprised them by extemporizing marvelously upon themes from his oratorio "St. Elizabeth," performances of which he attended both at St. James's Hall and the Crystal Palace. The welcome he received everywhere exceeded in warmth and spontaneity the expectations of his most fanatical admirers. Still more did the scenes enacted during his stay astonish this most petted and fêted of septuagenarians, with whom—anywhere outside "cold, unmusical England"—such outbursts of enthusiasm had been the concomitants of a lifetime.

I first heard him play on April 6, when he went to the Royal Academy to hand over to the committee of management the sum of eleven hundred pounds, raised through the efforts of Walter Bache for the foundation of a "Liszt scholarship" at that institution. The howl of joy uttered by the students when he sat down to the piano was something to remember. It was followed by an intense silence. Then the aged but still nimble fingers ran lightly over the keys, and I was listening for the first time in my life



to Franz Liszt. To attempt to describe his playing, after the many well-known Weimar pupils and distinguished writers who have tried to accomplish that task, would be mere presumption on my part. Even at seventy-five Liszt was a pianist whose powers lay beyond the pale to which sober language or calm criticism could reach or be applied. Enough that its greatest charm seemed to me to lie in a perfectly divine touch, and in a tone more remarkable for exquisitely musical quality than volume or dynamic force, aided by a technic still incomparably brilliant and superb.

Two days later Liszt proceeded to Windsor Castle, where he was received with the utmost cordiality by Queen Victoria. He played several pieces to her Majesty, who told him that she cherished a vivid recollection of his playing when he last visited London in 1841. On his return to town in the evening he attended a reception given in his honor at the Grosvenor Gallery by Walter Bache. This was in some respects the most striking function of the series. The gathering was in every sense a representative one, and the famous abbé, as he went chatting from group to group, seemed positively radiant with happiness. To repeat his own words to me, "You have so overwhelmed me with kindness in this country that I shall be quite sorry when the time comes for me to leave you."

The program comprised his "Angelus" for strings, a chorus for female voices, a pianoforte piece, and some songs; and finally, amid a scene of great excitement, he himself played the finale of Schubert's "Divertissement à la Hongroise" and his own Hungarian Rhapsody in A minor. This glorious treat furnished the crowning feature of a memorable evening—doubly memorable because it was the last time but one that Franz Liszt touched his instrument in the presence of a public or quasi-public assemblage.

THE premature decease of the gifted American barytone Eugène Oudin is always associated in my mind with that of Tschaikowsky. The reason lies in a rather curious chain of circumstances. In the

autumn of 1892 the Russian master's opera "Eugény Onégin" was produced in English at the Olympic Theatre, London, under the management of Signor Lago, with Eugène Oudin in the title-part. It met with poor success, and after a few nights was withdrawn.<sup>1</sup> In the June of 1893 Tschaikowsky came to England to receive the honorary degree of Doctor of Music at Cambridge University, the same distinction being simultaneously bestowed upon three other celebrated musicians, Camille Saint-Saëns, Max Bruch, and Arrigo Boïto. By a happy chance I traveled down to Cambridge in the same carriage with Tschaikowsky. I was quite alone in the compartment until the train was actually starting, when the door was opened and an elderly gentleman was unceremoniously lifted in, his luggage being bundled in after him by the porters. A glance told me who it was; I offered him my assistance, and after he had recovered his breath, he graciously recollected that I had been presented to him one night at the Philharmonic. Then followed an hour's delightful conversation.

Tschaikowsky chatted freely about music in Russia. He thought the development of the last twenty-five years had been phenomenal. He attributed it, first, to the intense musical feeling of the people, now coming to the surface; secondly, to the extraordinary wealth and characteristic beauty of the national melodies or folk-songs; and, thirdly, to the splendid work done by the great teaching institutions at St. Petersburg and Moscow. He spoke particularly of his own conservatory at Moscow, and begged that if I ever went to that city I should not fail to pay him a visit.<sup>2</sup> He then put some questions about England, and inquired specially as to the systems of management and teaching pursued at the Royal Academy and Royal College. I duly explained, and also gave him some information concerning the Guildhall School of Music and its three thousand students. It surprised him to hear that London possessed so gigantic a musical institution.

"I don't know," he added, "whether to consider England an unmusical nation or

<sup>1</sup> The whole undertaking was ill-timed and ill-placed. One of its few creditable features was the début in England of the barytone Mario Ancona, who sang first in "La Favorita" and afterward in "Lohengrin." He was engaged the following season for Covent Garden.

<sup>2</sup> I did go there in the summer of 1898, and, on presenting my card as an English friend of the lamented master, was received with every attention and token of cordiality.



not. Sometimes I think one thing, sometimes the other. But it is certain that you have audiences for music of every class, and it appears to me probable that before very long the larger section of your public will be for the best class only." Then the recollection of the failure of his "Eugény Onégin" occurred to him, and he asked me to what I attributed that—the music, the libretto, the performance, or what? I replied, without flattery, that it was certainly not the music. It might have been due in some measure to the lack of dramatic fiber in the story, and in a large degree to the inefficiency of the interpretation and the unsuitability of the *locale*. "Remember," I went on, "that Pushkin's poem is not known in this country, and that in opera we like a definite dénouement, not an ending where the hero goes out at one door and the heroine at another. As to the performance, the only figure in it that lives distinctly and pleasantly in my memory is Eugène Oudin's superb embodiment of Onégin."

"I have heard a great deal about Oudin," said Tschaikowsky; and then came a first-rate opportunity for me to descant upon the merits of the American barytone. I aroused the master's interest in him to such good purpose that he promised not to leave England without making his acquaintance.

"And hearing him sing?" I asked.

"Not only hear him sing," was the reply, "but invite him to come to Russia and ask him to sing some of my songs there."

As he said this, the train drew up at the Cambridge platform, and we alighted. Tschaikowsky was to be the guest of the master of Merton, and I offered, with permission, to see him to the college before proceeding to my hotel. Telling the flyman to take a slightly circuitous route, I pointed out the various places of interest as we passed them, and Tschaikowsky seemed thoroughly to enjoy the drive. When we parted at the college he shook me warmly by the hand, and expressed a hope that when he next visited England he might see more of me. Unhappily, that kindly wish was never to be fulfilled.

The group of new musical doctors was to have included Verdi and Grieg, but those composers were unable to accept the invitation of the university. However, the remaining four constituted a sufficiently

illustrious group, and the concert at the Guildhall was of memorable interest. Saint-Saëns played for the first time the brilliant pianoforte fantasia "Africa," which he had lately written at Cairo. Max Bruch directed a choral scene from his "Odysseus." Boïto conducted the prologue from "Mefistofele," Georg Henschel singing the solo part. And, finally, Tschaikowsky directed the first performance in England of his fine symphonic poem "Francesca da Rimini," a work depicting with graphic power the tormenting winds wherein Dante beholds Francesca in the "second circle" and hears her recital of her sad story, as described in the fifth canto of the "Inferno." The ovation that greeted each master in turn can be readily imagined.

Tschaikowsky and Eugène Oudin duly met. The latter sang the "Sérénade de Don Juan" and other songs of the Russian master, and so delighted him that the visit to St. Petersburg and Moscow was immediately arranged. Its success and its attendant sorrow are alike set forth in the following letter:

*Hôtel de France, St. Petersburg,  
November 8, 1893.*

MY DEAR KLEIN: You have of course read and commented on the terribly sudden demise of Tschaikowsky. You can imagine its effect on me! I missed him in Petersburg on my way to Moscow, and there received his message that he would not fail to be present at my début in the latter city. Instead came a telegram of sudden sickness, danger passed, and hope. This was on Saturday last. On Monday morning a telegram came to speak of—death!

On Wednesday last he was sound and well; he drank a glass of unfiltered water from the Neva, and cholera laid him low! It is awful! The musical societies throughout Russia are in mourning, and the concert which was to have been my début in Petersburg (next Saturday, the 11th) is postponed for a week. It will be made up entirely of works of the dead master. I shall sing the "Arioso" from "Onégin" and some of his romances, and the joint recital will take place the following day.

So my visit here is prolonged most unexpectedly.

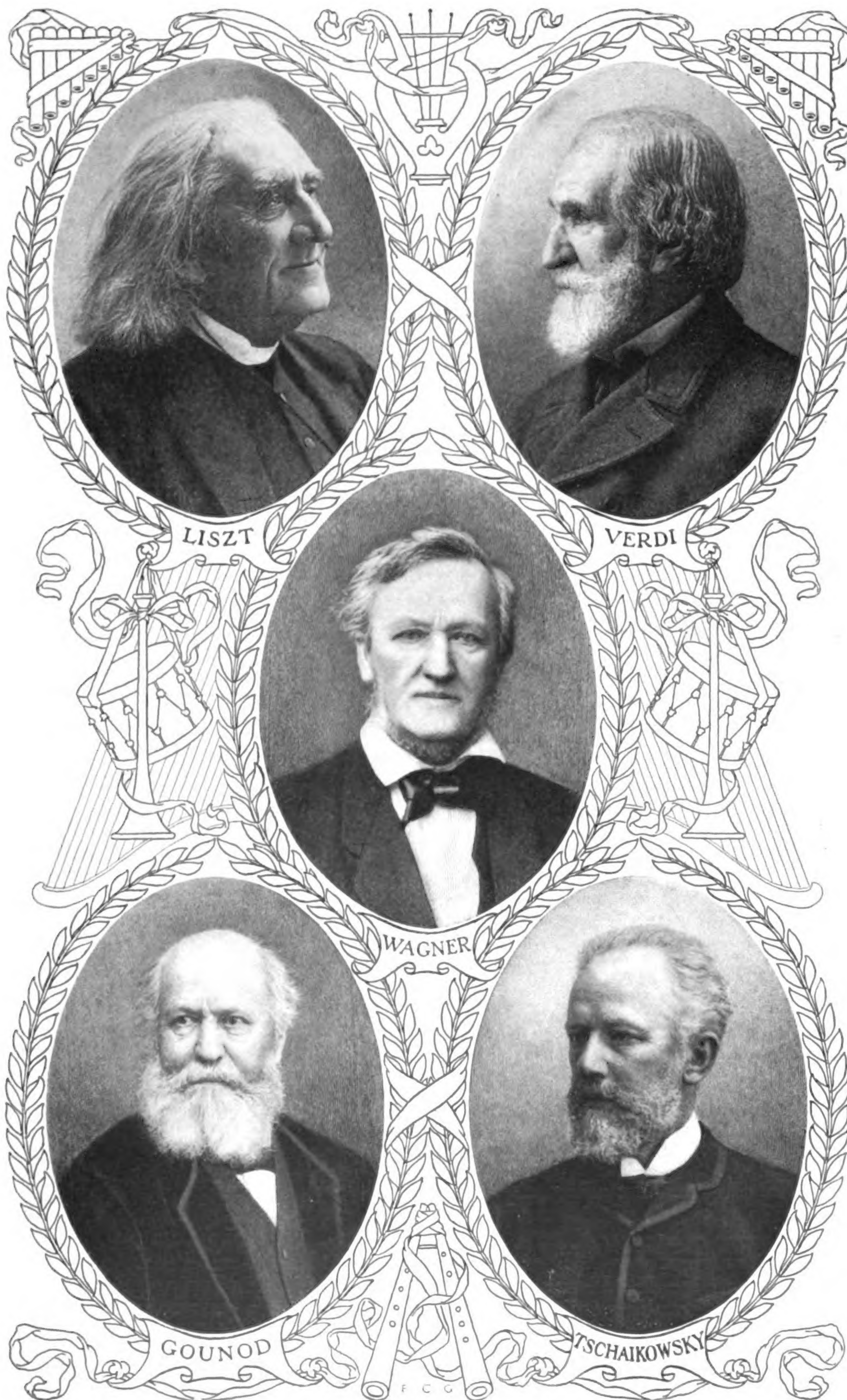
My début in Moscow was a magnificent success. I was recalled and encored again and again, . . . and the notices are very fine.

Yours in haste, but ever fraternally,

*Eugène Oudin.*

(To be continued.)





From a photograph by Nadar

From a photograph by Guigoni & Bossi

From a photograph by Boyer

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry

From a photograph by Reutlinger